

PHYSIOLOGUS



Table of Contents

EDITOR'S NOTE.....	3	THE TURTLE-DOVE.....	30
THE APE.....	4	THE DOVE.....	31
THE LION.....	5	THE PARTRIDGE.....	32
THE ANT-LION.....	7	THE PEACOCK.....	33
THE TIGER.....	7	THE ASIDA OR OSTRICH.....	33
THE PANTHER.....	8	THE PHŒNIX.....	35
THE FOX.....	8	THE PLOVER OR CHARADRIUS.....	37
THE HYÆNA.....	9	THE IBIS.....	37
THE ICHNEUMON.....	9	THE STORK.....	38
THE WEASEL.....	10	THE HERON.....	39
THE OTTER.....	10	THE PELICAN.....	40
THE BEAR.....	10	THE GERAHAV.....	41
THE HEDGEHOG.....	12	THE GRYPHON.....	41
THE BEAVER.....	12	THE BAT.....	42
THE WILD ASS.....	13	THE SUN-LIZARD.....	42
THE WILD ASS AND THE MONKEY.....	13	THE SERPENT.....	43
THE HART.....	14	THE ADDER OR ASP.....	44
THE WILD GOAT.....	15	THE FROG.....	45
THE UNICORN.....	16	THE SALAMANDER.....	46
THE ANTHOLOPS.....	16	THE BEE.....	46
THE URUS.....	17	THE WASP.....	48
THE ELEPHANT.....	18	THE ANT.....	49
THE PRION AND THE DOLPHIN.....	19	THE SEA-CRAB.....	50
THE HYDRIPPUS OR SEA-HORSE.....	21	THE TREE PERIDEXION.....	51
THE SIRENS AND THE CENTAURS.....	22	THE FIG-SYCAMORE.....	51
THE GORGON.....	22	THE DIAMOND.....	52
THE WOODPECKER.....	23	THE AGATE AND THE PEARL.....	53
THE EAGLE.....	24	THE MAGNET-STONE.....	54
THE VULTURE.....	25	THE INDIAN STONE.....	54
THE HALCYON.....	26	THE KINDLING STONES.....	54
THE NIGHT RAVEN.....	27	THE ECHENEIS.....	55
THE CROW.....	28	THE SEA-URCHIN.....	55
THE SWALLOW.....	28	THE POLYPUS.....	56
THE LAPWING OR HOOPOE.....	29		

EDITOR'S NOTE

Symbology has always been important for Christians since the beginning of the Church, and animals as well as the natural world have been used to communicate theological truths for thousands of years. In the early centuries of the Church, the *physiologus*, a symbolical book of beasts, stones and plants, began to circulate around the Christian world. The original is believed to have been written in Greek, in Alexandria, Egypt, sometime around the end of the second to the beginning of the third century. The symbolical and mystical nature of the text reflects the style of hermeneutics popular in Alexandria during the time of their composition.

It was quickly circulated throughout the Christian world, was translated into many languages and became a very influential writing for Christendom until the time of the Reformation. There are multiple textual traditions, with many versions having different animals, legends, and allegories. Many of the animals legends are taken from prior sources, such as Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, then these legends are given Christian morals and allegories. Eventually the *physiologus* was incorporated into medieval bestiaries along with additional material from other works such as St. Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* and St. Basil's *Hexaemeron*.

This translation is based on a Greek text and is the work of James Carlill. The translation was published in a larger work, *The Epic of the Beast*¹.

¹ William Rose, James Carlill, and William Stallybrass, *The Epic of the Beast* (London: George Routledge & Sons LTD., 1924), 153-250

THE APE

This animal is very mischievous and fond of imitation. Whatever it sees men do, it immediately does the same. Hence he who wishes to catch an Ape takes a kind of lime which is called bird-lime, and pretends to anoint his eyes with the lime; then he goes away from that place and leaves the lime there. When now the hunter is quite gone away from the place where he left the lime and has hidden himself in a particular spot, then the Ape comes out of his nest and anoints his eyes as the hunter did, and he becomes blind and knows not where he is. As soon as the hunter sees that the Ape has anointed his eyes with the lime and has become blind, he runs up with a cord which he has ready, and ties the cord round the Ape's neck, and fastens the end of the cord to a tree. And the Ape steps up and down and becomes tame by force.

In this manner does the Devil, the great hunter, chase us. He comes into the world and brings with him the lime of sin, for sin is like bird-lime. And he shows man how to blind his eyes and darken his mind, and draws him on from sin to sin and from evil to evil, and he makes a great snare of rope, for sin is insatiable, and the man becomes spotted with it, body and soul. And when the Devil finds the man following him, he holds him fast in the snare, saying: "There is now no salvation for thee; thou hast brought thyself to the ground; thou art not worthy to enter the Church, for thy sins are countless — how can'st thou clear thyself from them? If thou hast not repented thyself this year, thou wilt surely put off repentance in future." And to-day or to-morrow comes Death the thief and bears away the impenitent. Therefore says the prophet: "Woe to those who commit sin." I warn you, listen not to that Evil One lest he triumph over you through his cunning. So as often as we sin so often let us repent and hasten to God and cry with holy Paul: " Shall not the fallen one stand up again?" As often as thou fallest so often stand up again, and forthwith thou seest clearly the love of God and his mercy vouchsafed to us penitents.

Well spake Physiologus of the Ape.

THE LION

Let us now speak of the Lion, the king of beasts and verily of all living beings. For did not Jacob praising Judah call him a young lion from his birth? (Gen. 49, 9).

Physiologus tells of the Lion that he has three attributes.

His first attribute is this. When he goes about the mountains and in his wanderings the scent of the hunter is borne to him, then he brushes away his footprints with his tail, so that the hunter may not find his cavern by following his track and do him harm.

So has our Saviour—the strong conquering lion of the tribe of Judah, of the root of David (Rev. 5, 5)—sent from the eternal Father—hidden his holy footsteps, that is, his divinity. With the angels he became an angel, with the thrones a throne, with the powers a power, with mankind a man, until he bowed himself and came to the mother Mary, whereby he redeemed the wandering race of men. “The word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Whereupon the angel, not recognizing the descended one, said: “Who is this King of Glory?” But the Holy Ghost answered: “The Lord of Hosts: He is the King of Glory” [Ps. 24, 10].

[From Thetbaldus] The high hill on which the Lion stands is the kingdom of heaven. Christ is the lion who descended from that hill and lighted here on earth. The Devil is the cunning hunter who yet could not trace from whence Christ came nor how he housed himself in the deft maid Mary for our salvation.

[From Philip de Thaun] It is written that the Lion is of such a nature that when he is hunted he wipes out with his tail the traces of his footsteps as he goes along so that none can trace him.

The track of the Lion typifies the incarnation. For thus did God covertly lower himself by degrees through the orders of prophets and apostles until he became fleshly man, and thus he vanquished the Devil. The Devil had deceived man: so God by a more cunning stratagem deceived the Devil. If the Devil had known that God was become mortal man, he would never have led him on so far as to crucify him. So God acted cunningly and without being perceived. The angels in heaven did not know it. Therefore

when the Son of God came in his majesty they demanded of the angels who were with him “Who is this King of Glory?” They who were with God gave this answer: “It is the King of Glory who returns with victory.” And again the angels who were in heaven demanded: “Why has he a garment of red?” The angels and our Lord answered: “For martyrdom suffered on earth to gain our souls.” And this we are to understand by the Lion’s track.

The second attribute of the Lion is this: When he sleeps in his cavern, then is he the more wakeful, for his eyes are open. To this testifies Solomon in The Song of Songs when he says: “I sleep and my heart wakes” (Cant. 5, 5). For the fleshly part of the Lord slept on the Cross, but his Godhead wakes on the right hand of the Father. For the Shepherd of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

The third attribute of the Lion is this: When the lioness brings forth her young, she brings it forth dead. But the Lioness watches over her cub until the third day, when the father comes and roars and breathes in its face and wakens it. So did the God and Father of the Universe waken the first born of all creation, our Lord Jesus Christ, his Son, from the dead. Well now spoke Jacob when he said of Judah the Lion’s whelp: “Who shall rouse him up?”

[From Pitra, cod. B] The fourth attribute of the Lion is this: When he finds nothing to eat, he goes to a desolate place or on a mountain, and encloses a great space within a circle, which he sweeps out with his tail trailing behind him on the ground, and so he frames a kind of pen. And when he draws near to the place from which he made a beginning, he stretches himself out on the ground with his eyes open. Now, when the animals come and are afraid to pass by the Lion, they go away from him round the pen; and, since they do not find him there, they come close to the Lion, and he seizes them and destroys them. As now the Lion flees from the hunter brushing out his footsteps with his tail so that the hunter cannot track him—so, wise man, when thou givest alms let not thy left hand know the work of thy right hand, that the devil may not in any way track thee out by thy good works and lead thee rather to evil.

Well spake Physiologus concerning the Lion.

THE ANT-LION

Eliphas the king of Theman said: “The Ant-Lion perished for lack of food” (Job 4, 11).

Physiologus says that he has the countenance of a Lion and the hinder parts of an ant. His father is a flesh-eater, but his mother is a plant-eater. When now they beget the Ant-Lion they beget him with two attributes: he cannot eat flesh, for that is contrary to the nature of his mother; and he cannot get nourishment from plants, for that is against the nature of his father: so he perishes because there is no food for him.

So, likewise, has every man a double spirit contrary in all its ways. Man cannot go two ways nor speak double in prayer. It is not well to say Yes and No. Let your Yea be Yea and your Nay Nay: “For woe be to the sinner that goeth two ways ” (Sirach, 2, 12).

THE TIGER

There is a four-footed beast like the Lion with longer and more curved nose. It is found in India, and is called Tiger, and they say that it guards its young in a hollow glass globe. When it finds that its cub is stolen, it hurls itself on the track of the robber as swiftly as the wind, and overtakes him however great is the space between them. Thereupon the robber gives the Tiger his cub in the glass globe, and the careful beast fears to break it and so injure the young one. He brings it back to his cave rolling the glass globe before him. [The doctrinal part is missing.]

THE PANTHER

The prophet prophesied and said: “I will be to Ephraim as a panther” (Hos. 5, 14).

Physiologus relates of the panther that he has the following attribute: He is the friendliest of all beasts, but he is an enemy to Dragons. He is as many-coloured as Joseph’s coat. He is very quiet and gentle. When he has eaten and satisfied himself, he goes to sleep in his cavern. And on the third day he awakes out of his sleep, and cries with a loud voice. And the animals both far and near hear his voice. And after the cry a very pleasant odour proceeds out of his mouth, and the animals follow the pleasant odour, and run to be near him.

So also, when Christ awoke the third day and rose from the dead, He spread a pleasant odour of peace both far and near. Very manifold is the true wisdom of God. The psalmist says: “The Queen stands at thy right hand clothed in a garment of gold and many colours” (Ps. 45, 10), which is the Church. Very manifold is Christ, because he himself is chastity, temperance, charity, faith, virtue, patience, harmony, and peace.

Finely spake Physiologus of the Panther.

THE FOX

“The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests” (Matt. 8, 20): thus says the Scripture concerning the Lord: and in The Song of Solomon Salome says: “Bring us the little foxes, for they destroy the grapes” (Cant. 2, 15), and David says in a psalm: “They will become the portion of the foxes” (Ps. 63, 10).

Physiologus relates of the Fox that he is a very crafty animal. When he is hungry and can find no prey, he entices it thus: he seats himself in a warm place where there is chaff, or else casts himself on his back and holds his breath and swells up his body completely so that he appears dead. The birds believe that he is really dead, and they fly down to him in order to eat him up; but he springs up and catches them and eats them up.

So also is the Devil very crafty in his ways. He who would partake of his flesh dies. To this flesh belong adultery, covetousness, lust, murder. Thence also Herod is likened to this animal: “Go”, says the Lord, “and speak to that fox” (Luke 13, 32).

Well spake Physiologus of the Fox.

THE HYÆNA

The Law says: “Thou shalt not eat the Hyæna nor his kind” (Deut. 14, 8).

Physiologus relates of this animal that it is man-woman, now male now female. It is an unclean beast, because it changes its nature. On this account Jeremiah says: “My heritage is the cave of the hyæna” (Deut. 12, 8).

Now make not thyself like to the Hyæna which the Godly Apostle upbraids when he compares it to the men and women of Rome who had changed the natural use for that which is against nature.

THE ICHNEUMON

There is a beast called Ichneumon. He is the enemy of dragons. If he finds a very wild dragon, he goes and smears himself with mud, and covers his nose with his tail.

In like manner our Saviour took upon himself our earthly body and hid his divinity in it until he had slain the great Dragon which sat on the river of Egypt (Ezek. 29, 3). For if Christ had attacked the Dragon without taking a mortal body, the dragon would have opposed him seeing that he was God and Saviour. But he who was above all bowed himself down that he might save all (Philip. 2, 8).

THE WEASEL

The Law commands: “Thou shalt not eat the Weasel nor any of his kind” (Lev. 11, 29).

Physiologus relates of the weasel that it has the following attribute. It conceives in its head, and brings forth the young through the ear.

There are some who lightly receive the spiritual bread in the Church; but, when they are gone away, they cast the word of the Lord out of their ears and become as the deaf adder, which stoppeth her ears. Also eat not the Weasel nor its kind.

THE OTTER

There is a beast called Otter which has the form of a dog. It is an enemy of crocodiles. When the crocodile sleeps, it keeps its mouth open. Now the Otter draws near and smears its whole body with mud, and, when the mud is dry, it springs into the mouth of the Crocodile and tears its entrails.

The Crocodile resembles the Devil, but the otter is the type and image of our Saviour. For after he took upon him his earthly flesh he went down into hell and loosed the pains of death, and rose again the third day.

THE BEAR

Physiologus relates of the Bear that it is a beast clumsy by nature and unable to run easily like other beasts, but drags itself along slowly. It prefers rather to bury itself in the ground and keep itself hidden in a hole, for its limbs are not adapted to convey swiftly such a monstrous body. In the time of cold it always stays in its hole.

The Bear is like unto us, because he presents the image and picture of sin, which is clumsy and hangs on man and drags after him so that he is held backwards. And he

runs not easily, that is, he (the Devil) does not urge him suddenly into sin; but he moves slowly, that is the hunter by artifice beguiles him into desiring a sin. And he loves to hide and bury himself in his lurking-place, that is in that which satisfies his desires. Also in the time of cold he keeps himself tightly in his hole, that is when man is snared through his lust he (the Devil) brings him into the pit prepared for him, and holds him for the rest of his life.

[From Basil] But there is in the Bear a certain wisdom, for, when he is ill or has wounds on his body, he goes and finds a root called pholmis, and lays it on his sores and they are healed. The nature of this root is to dry up whatever it is applied to, and with its own natural moisture it easily dries up the humours of the wounds, and they begin to heal.

So also goes the Fox when he is wounded and takes of the resin which comes from the tree biturea. This he lays on the wounds, and they vanish and are healed. In like manner the turtle, when it eats the flesh of the viper and begins to suffer pains therefrom, goes to the root organum (marjoram), and eats thereof and is healed of its pains. So also the snake, when its eyes are painful, goes and eats foeniculum (fennel), and becomes healed and its sight restored: In this way may we men also, when our bodies are stricken with evil and our souls spotted with the wounds of sin, take out the evil that is in us by careful wisdom. Let us arise and take the root of life and salvation from the holy table with trembling and care and lay it on our wounds and eat it. And at once shall we be healed through the holy food, and our sickness will be taken from us, and our darkened eyes will be opened, and we shall see our souls and learn to know ourselves.

THE HEDGEHOG

Physiologus relates of the Hedgehog that he is a small beast shaped like a ball entirely set round with prickles. He procures his nourishment in this way: he goes to a vine, reaches down the clusters, tears off the grapes, and casts them on the ground. Then he throws himself down, and the grapes fasten on to his prickles, and he brings them home to his children, and leaves the clusters empty on the vine.

The hole in which the Hedgehog lives is provided with two openings and is bored with air-holes, and, when the North wind begins to blow, he stops the opening which is turned to the North wind, but when the South wind blows he stops the opening which is turned to the South wind, and opens the North hole which he before had stopped.

And thou, oh man!, do thou apply thyself to the right and true vine which is Christ, the true God, and consider how thou canst allow the evil spirit to draw thee from thy safe place and drag thee into error with the prickles of death so thy place of safety is lost and thy soul becomes empty as the vine.

THE BEAVER

There is a beast called the Beaver, who is very gentle and quiet; but his organs of reproduction are very useful to him in the protection of his body; for, when he is pursued by the hunter and is about to be captured, he bites them off and casts them back to the hunter; and afterwards when the beaver encounters any other hunter he throws himself on his back, and, when the hunter perceives that he is mutilated, he leaves him alone.

So do thou, oh man!, give back to the hunter, the Devil, that which belongs to him, such as unchastity, adultery, greediness. Cut away all such and give them to the Devil and he will let thee go, and thou shalt say: "My soul is as a bird escaped from the net of the fowler." (Ps. 124, 7)

THE WILD ASS

It is written in Job “Who hath let loose the Wild Ass?” (Job 39, 5)

Physiologus relates that, when the herds of the Wild Ass pasture, the male wanders about in search of another male, and when he finds him he mutilates him so that he is of no more use.

The patriarchs sought for increase but the Apostles, in whom was the true way of life, practised abstinence, longing only for heavenly seed. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah: “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear: sing and cry aloud thou that didst not travail with child, for the lonely has more children than the children of the married.” (Is. 54, 1)

THE WILD ASS AND THE MONKEY

Physiologus relates of the Wild Ass that he is found in kings’ palaces, and on the 25th of the month Phamenot men learn from the Wild Ass that day and night are equal, for when the Wild Ass has brayed twelve times in succession, then the King and the Court know that day and night have become equal. And also, when the Monkey turns round seven times in the day, then is it known that day and night are equal.

The Wild Ass is the Devil, and when the night, that is the generation of the heathen, is become equal to the day, that is the line of the prophets, then the Wild Ass, that is the Devil, brays.

[de Thaun] For the Ass is grieved when day and night are equal: he loves the long night better; and the Devil deplores the decrease of his people.

And herein also is the Ape the image of the Devil, for he has a beginning but no end, that is he has no tail. In the beginning the Devil was of the Archangels, but he fell, and his end is not to be found.

Well spake Physiologus concerning the Ape and the Wild Ass.

THE HART

“As the Hart panteth after the water-brooks”, says the godly David, “so panteth my soul after thee.”

Physiologus says of the Hart that he is very thirsty, and the reason of his thirst is this, that he eats snakes. For the snake is an enemy of the Hart. When the snake goes to its hole in the earth, then the Hart seeks the spring and takes a deep draft of the spring-water, and fills its mouth, and spits it into the earth-hole, and drives the snake out and kills it. In like manner will the great snake the Devil be driven out by the waters of godly learning. So was the Lord also able to destroy the great snake namely the Devil through the heavenly water, namely through godly learning. Now the snake cannot come near the Hart, nor can the Devil approach the excellent word of the Lord. So do thou, oh man!, fill thy throat with the words of the Lord, which say to thee that thou shalt not steal nor murder nor commit adultery. And, if thou discoverest any evil in thyself, spit it out, and thou wilt destroy that wickedest of all dragons, the Devil. And, when the Lord suffered the water and blood to stream out of his side, he destroyed the power of the dragon over us through the bath of the second birth and took from us every devilish influence.

In another way the Hart resembles the eremites of the desert, who spend virtuous and painfully troublous lives, and who, when they become thirsty, hasten to the spring of salvation bringing repentance, and through the virtue of tears extinguish the glowing darts of the Evil One, and crush under their feet and destroy the great dragon, the Devil.

[Pitra] Another attribute has the Hart, for it resembles the wild gazelle and has antlers with three branches after their third renewal. The Hart lives for fifty years, and at the end of that time it runs like a strong runner through the wooded valleys and down the ravines of the mountains, and it scents the holes of the snakes, and forthwith lays its nostrils to the entrance of the hole and holds its breath. Thereupon the snake rushes out and goes into the mouth of the Hart, and the Hart swallows the snake, and therefore is he called ἑλᾰφος, because he drew the snake out of the depths. Then with the snake he runs to the water-brook, for unless he drinks water within three hours thereafter he dies; but,

if he finds water, then he lives again another fifty years. Therefore said David: “As the Hart desires the fresh water-brook so does my soul desire thee, O God.”

And thou too, pious man, hast three renewals in thee: these are a baptism of immortality the mercy of adoption as a son and penance.

And when thou catchest the snake which has entered thy breast, that is sin, then run at once with it to the water-course of scripture and of prophecy. Enlightened by these, drink the water of life, that is the holy gift, and renew thyself with penance, and thy sins are destroyed.

Well indeed has Physiologus discoursed concerning the Hart.

THE WILD GOAT

There is a beast called the Wild Goat. Physiologus relates of him that he loves the higher mountains, but he finds his food in the lower mountains, and he observes from afar all who approach him, and knows at once whether they come with evil or with friendly intent toward him.

The Wild Goat is the image of the wisdom of God. For he it is who loves the high mountains, as Solomon said: “My beloved wanders on the high mountains and leaps on the hills” (Cant. 2, 8). The mountains are a type of the prophets and the hills of the Apostles. And, as the Wild Goat is very keen-sighted, so he signifies that the Saviour sees all things. For he is called God (θεός) because he sees all our deeds (θεωρεῖ). And he knows those who come to him with deceit, as he knew Judas when he came to betray him with a kiss. For he knew, said the Psalmist, those who were with him (Ps. 1, 6). And John said also: “Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.” (John 1, 29)

THE UNICORN

“Thou hast exalted my horn”, said the Psalmist, “like the horn of the Unicorn.”
(Ps. 92, 11)

Physiologus relates of the Unicorn that it has the following attribute. It is a small beast like a goat; but it is very wary and the hunter cannot approach it because it possesses great cunning. It has a horn in the middle of its head. Let us now relate how it is caught. They send to it a pure virgin all robed. And the Unicorn springs into the lap of the maiden, and she subdues him, and he follows her; and so she leads him to the King’s palace.

By this we see that the Unicorn is the image of our Saviour, the horn of salvation raised for us in the house of our father David. The heavenly powers could not of themselves accomplish the work, but he had to become flesh and to dwell in the body of the true virgin Mary.

There is a further attribute of the Unicorn. In the places where he dwells there is a great lake, and to this lake all beasts resort to drink. But before they assemble themselves comes the snake, and casts her poison on the water. And the beasts when they observe the poison dare not drink, but stand aside and wait for the Unicorn. He comes and goes straight into the lake, and marks the sign of the Cross with his horn; and thereupon the poison becomes harmless, and all those beasts drink.

THE ANTHOLOPS

There is a beast called the Antholops. He is very crafty, so that the hunter cannot approach him. He has on his head great horns in the shape of a saw, so that he can saw through the trunks of the highest trees reaching up to heaven and throw them down to the ground. When he is thirsty, he goes to the Euphrates and drinks. Near that river grow sweet-brooms with branches bending over. The Antholops begins to play with the sweet-brooms, and entangles his horns in the branches; and presently he finds himself held fast

and twists round and cries out loudly, because he wants to get away but cannot. When the hunter hears this he knows the Antholops is caught, and comes and kills it.

And thou, oh man!, thou hast both horns, the Old and the New Testaments, with which thou canst attack thine enemies, which are unchastity, adultery, greed, and other passions. Remember that they are like the sweet-broom: entangle not thyself in them lest the evil hunter be able to kill thee.

THE URUS

The Urus is of all beasts the largest. It is like to a bull, and has two horns of the shape of a saw, and it is terrible of aspect above all beasts. It shakes the loftiest trees and saws them in two, and tears off the boughs, for there is no stronger beast than this. It travels not far from the sea, but when it has drunk it becomes as if intoxicated and threatens the earth with its horns like a bull. There is, however, a kind of tree called tanus, with white branches, and, when the Urus shakes this tree with his head, his horns become entangled and he is held tight so that the hunter is able to seize and kill him.

Do thou, oh man!, consider carefully how much more nobly God has framed thee than he has framed the Urus. For in the place of horns he has given thee two Testaments, which are weapons against the power of evil. For the prophet says: "For thee will we seize our enemies by the horns." The ocean betokens the fulness of the kingdom, the tanus-tree the pleasures of life, in which that man becomes entangled who neglects the truth. The hunter also, that is the Devil, seizes the man whom he finds given over to lusts and forsaking his faith, and brings him into his power.

THE ELEPHANT

There is a beast called the Elephant. The male has no desire for offspring. When, therefore, the female wishes to bear, she resorts to the far East near to Paradise. In that part grows a tree called mandragora. To this tree comes the male Elephant with the female, and she eats first of the tree and gives of the tree to him, and plays with him until he also partakes of it. And, when the time draws near for the birth, she goes into a lake until the water reaches her breast. And so at length is born the young, just above the water, and forthwith goes to the breast of the mother and sucks. But meantime the male Elephant keeps a strict watch against snakes, for the snake is an enemy of the Elephant. When he finds a snake, he tramples on it, and kills it.

The Elephant has the following attribute. When he falls down, he is unable to rise again, for his legs have no joints. But how comes he ever to fall? In this way. When he wants to sleep, he leans against a certain tree, and so sleeps. Now the Indian, who knows the sleeping place of the Elephant, goes there, and saws the tree partly through. The Elephant comes now to lean thereon as he is accustomed, and, as soon as he comes close to the tree, it gives way, and he falls with it to the ground.

Now after he has fallen he cannot rise again. He begins therefore to weep and cry aloud. Another Elephant hears his cry, and comes to help him; but he cannot raise the fallen one. Thereupon they both lament and cry aloud; and twelve more Elephants now come to help, but they are not able to raise the fallen one. Thereupon they all cry out. Last of all comes the little Elephant, and lays his trunk round the fallen Elephant and lifts him up from the ground.

The nature of the little Elephant is such that, if you burn his hair or his bones in any place whatever, that place is for ever free from Devils or snakes, nor will ever any evil thing be found there.

The pair of Elephants is like to Adam and Eve. Adam and his wife, as long as they lived in the plenty of Paradise, were innocent of all carnal desire; but, when the woman had eaten of the tree, the potent mandragora, and given it to him, then they fell to evil

passions, and she bare Cain over the miry waters (Gen. 4, 1). As David said: “Save me, O God, for the waters rise to my soul.” (Ps. 69, 2)

When now the great Elephant, which is the Law, was come, he could not raise the fallen one. There-upon came the twelve Elephants namely the prophets, but these could not raise him. At the last came the true Elephant, Christ the Lord, and raised the fallen one from the earth. For the first of all was the smallest of all. He humbled himself and took the form of a servant that he might redeem all. (Phil. 2, 7)

THE PRION AND THE DOLPHIN

This beast has long wings, and, when it sees a ship sailing, it raises its wings on high and sails, waging jealousy with the ship. Yet, when it has made but twenty or thirty stadia, it grows tired and folds its wings over itself, and lets the waves carry it back to its old place.

The ship now may be taken as an image of the Apostles and the martyrs who, having travelled through the stormy billows, that is the troubles of life, have sheltered themselves in the safe haven, the heavenly kingdom. But the beast is the type of those who, having made a beginning of the service of the ascetics, have turned again to their former way, the worldly life.

Well indeed spake Physiologus of the Prion.

It is further related [Arabian] that there is in the sea a beast which is called Dolphin: it possesses two long wings, and when a ship at sea, overwhelmed by the violence of the billows, is in danger of sinking, then this beast feels compassion on the mariners, and raises its wings on high, and goes under the ship, and raises it to the surface out of the billows. And it continues to bear the burden for a time, but presently grows weary and abandons the increasing toil.

We may liken the sea to this world, and the waves to the hateful thoughts and things which befall man. The Dolphin we may liken to the man who begins to do what is good and righteous, but, when contrary circumstances overcome him, is struck to the

ground, and becomes troubled. But thou shouldst persevere in good and righteous deeds, and bear the adverse circumstances with a brave spirit like the Three Young Men who said in their hearts: "If we are cast in the fiery furnace we will endure it and will not deny our religion nor forsake the creed of our fathers."

We know the signs and wonders that followed, and how God protected them so that no hair of them was burnt, and great honour was paid to them before God. And so did many of the holy ones fight and struggle with perseverance that they might achieve signs and wonders, as the Lord Jesus has said: "Whoso believes in Me and holds fast My commandments will do that which I do, and what I do that shall he himself do"; and what He has said will be found sure and certain. Glory be to Him for ever and ever. Amen. Solomon teaches in the Book of Proverbs: "Go not near a light woman. Honey drops from her lips and her mouth is smoother than oil, but later thou wilt find the bitterness of gall and the sharpness of a two-edged sword. Her feet lead whomsoever goes with her down to death and hell." (Prov. 5, 3)

There is a great monster in the sea called the Whale. He has two attributes. His first attribute is this: When he is hungry, he opens wide his jaws, and therefrom streams a very sweet savour. And all the little fishes gather themselves in heaps and shoals round the whale's mouth, and it laps them all up; but the big and full grown fish keep away from him. So do the Devil and the heretic, through their pleasant speaking and the seduction of their savour, tempt the simple and those who are wanting in judgment. But they of good and firm understanding are not to be so caught. Job was a fully-grown fish, as also were Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and the whole choir of prophets. So likewise had Judith power to escape from Holofernes, Esther from Artaxerxes, Susannah from the elders, and Thekla from Thamyras.

The other attribute of the Whale is as follows: The monster is very large, just like an island. Now the sailors in their ignorance moor their boat to him as to the shore of an island. They make a fire thereon to cook their meal. And, when the monster feels the heat, then he dives down into the depths of the sea, and carries the boat with him man and mouse.

Thou, oh man!, if thou fasten thyself to the empty hopes of the Devil, wilt sink with him into the fires of hell.

Well indeed has Physiologus spoken concerning the Whale.

THE HYDRIPPUS OR SEA-HORSE

There is also a beast called the Hydrippus. The front part of his body resembles a horse, but from the haunch backwards he has the shape of a fish. He swims in the sea, and is the leader of all fishes. But in the Eastern parts of the earth there is a gold-coloured fish whose body is all bright and burnished, and it never leaves its home. When the fish of the sea have met together and gathered themselves into flocks, they go in search of the Hydrippus; and, when they have found him, he turns himself towards the East, and they all follow him, all the fish both from the North and from the South; and they draw near to the golden fish, the Hydrippus leading them. And, when the Hydrippus and all the fish are arrived, they greet the golden fish as their King, and then they return back again each to his own region. And as they go the male fish swim in front and the female after, so that they may receive the spawn which is cast away by the males.

The Hydrippus signifies Moses, the first of the prophets. The sea signifies the world, and the fishes signify the way of righteousness. They turn first to the prophets by whom they are conducted to the Holy Ghost. Those who follow not the Hydrippus, but wander away, fall into the nets of the fishers, who signify the prophets of Baal and the counsels of destruction. But those who listen to prophesying and obey it fall not into the nets.

Well indeed spake Physiologus of the Hydrippus.

THE SIRENS AND THE CENTAURS

The prophet Isaiah said that Devils, Sirens, and hedgehogs should dance in Babylon. (Is. 13, 21)

Physiologus relates of the Sirens and Centaurs that they are death-dealing creatures dwelling in the sea. Like the Muses, they sing with their voices, and the sailors, when they hear their melody, cast themselves into the sea and perish. They have the form of a woman down to the waist, and the lower half has the appearance of a bird. In like manner the Centaurs have the upper part as of a man, and from the breast down the form of a horse.

So has every man two souls, and is unstable in his ways.

So are there many who assemble in the Church with the show of godly behaviour while all the time they deny its influence. In the Church they are as men, but when they are gone out they become dead. These are as Sirens and Centaurs double-willed and hypocritical heretics, for through their empty conversation they lead astray the hearts of the good, like Sirens. For evil communications corrupt good manners.

Well spake Physiologus of the Sirens and Centaurs.

THE GORGON

The Gorgon has the appearance of a beautiful, enticing woman. Her hair is like gold; but her face is death. She plays and laughs at times, and again she roams, raging furiously around the mountains of the West. And when the day of her longing comes she stands up and cries aloud, first like a lion and the other wild animals, then like a man, then like a herd of cattle, and then like a winged dragon, and she says: "Come to me and satisfy the desire of the flesh." And all who hear her come swiftly and look at her. For she knows all languages of beasts and of men, of cattle, and of birds. But when they see her, then at once they die.

Now in what way does the enchanter overcome her? He can read in the stars the place of her abiding and wanders thither enchanting her from afar. She then at once begins to cry out like a lion and like the other wild animals. And, when he comes within hearing of her voice, he answers her and says: "Dig a hole near by the river and lay thy head inside so that I may not see and die, and I will come to thee." And she does it at once. Then comes the enchanter, and without looking cuts off her head. And he does not look at the head so that he may not die. And when he takes the head, he holds it in a vessel. But, when he sees a dragon or fierce animals or wicked men, he holds before them the head of the Gorgon and turns them to stone, as also King Alexander subdued and conquered all people.

And thou too, oh man!, if thy mind is wisely inclined towards God shalt unharmed rule over all the Powers of Evil.

Well now spake Physiologus of the Gorgon.

THE WOODPECKER

The Woodpecker is a gay-coloured bird. He gets up into the trees and pecks at them with his beak, and then listens with his ear. And, when he finds the tree is hollow and decayed, he builds his nest in it; but, if the tree is sound to the heart, he flies away from it.

As the Woodpecker, when he finds a hollow tree, builds his nest in it, so also does the Devil with man; for, when he finds one faint-hearted in the path of virtue, therein he takes up his abode, and brings there the wandering spirits of evil and unholy passions. But, when he finds one valiant in holiness and faith, therefrom he flies away at once.

THE EAGLE

The holy and blessed David said: “Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle’s.”
(Ps. 103, 5)

Now Physiologus says of the Eagle that he has the following attribute: When he is ageing, his flight grows heavy and his eyesight dim. What does he now do? He seeks first a pure spring of water, and flies aloft to the ether of the sun, and burns off his old feathers, and loosens the film over his eyes, and flies down to the spring, and therein dives three times under and renews himself and becomes young again.

And thou now, oh man! disciple of Christ, when the garb of the old man encumbereth thee and the eyes of thy heart are grown dull, seek the youth-renewing spring, the fountain of living water, which is the word of God, which says ye have forsaken me, the spring of living waters, and fly aloft to the sun of righteousness, Jesus Christ, and cast off the old man with all his works. And dive three times under in the ever-flowing spring of penance in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and put on the new man after the image in which God created men; and then will the prophecy of David be fulfilled and thy youth be renewed as that of the eagle.

[Ponce de Leon] The Eagle is the king of birds, and his name signifies the length of his life (detos), for he lives a hundred years. But, when he becomes old, his beak bends and his eyes become dull, so that he can neither see nor get food for himself. Thereupon he rises in the air, and, rushing before the wind, he dashes himself against a steep rock and shatters his beak. Then he bathes himself in cold water, and then mounts up to the rays of the sun, whereupon the dullness vanishes from his eyes and he becomes young again.

And thou, wise man, when thou art burdened with thy multitude of sins, do thou also raise thyself to the heights, namely thine own conscience, and dash thyself on the rock, namely the orthodox faith, and bewail thy sins and purify thyself in the running water, namely thy tears of penitence; and then warm thyself in the beams of the sun, that is the community of believers, and cast away the inflammation, sin, which clouds thy

sight, and thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's, and thou shalt be called righteous before God.

THE VULTURE

Well spake our Lord and Saviour in the Gospel: "Woe to them that are with child and to them that give suck." (Matt. 24, 19)

Physiologus says that the Vulture is found in high and exposed places, and nests in the rocks or a crevice of the mountains. When it becomes with child, it flies to India in search of the birth-stone. This stone is about the size of a nut. When it is shaken another stone is heard to move inside, shifting and rattling. When the Vulture resorts to the stone, it places itself over it, and then brings forth without trouble.

Do thou, oh man!, when thou becomest full of the Holy Ghost, take to the powerful and birth-helping corner-stone once rejected by the builders, and place thyself on it. In truth this stone, our Lord Jesus Christ, made without hands, and born of a Virgin, is helpful to the birth of the Holy Ghost. And, as that stone has another stone within it, so also has the body of our Lord the Godhead within it.

[Mustoxydes] The female Vulture, when the time of birth draws near, sits sighing in her nest. And, when she cannot readily bring forth, then the male Vulture flies away far to the East. There lies a deep chasm in the rocks, and he casts himself from on high into the chasm, and takes the birth-stone, and carries it back to the nest; and the female brings forth readily. And then the male Vulture takes the stone back again to its place.

And thou, oh rational man!, when thou fallest into sin, do penance that it may heal thee of thy foul disorder. Fear the day of punishment so that thou mayest not lose thy soul.

[Pitra] Physiologus relates also that the Vulture is voracious above all birds. He fasts forty days, and afterwards when he finds food he eats forty measures, and so makes up again for the fast of forty days.

And thou, wise man, fastest forty days choosing the time of our Lord's Resurrection. Wilt thou not give up drunkenness, so that thou destroyest not the fast of forty days?

[Mustoxydes] When the Vulture is in need of food, he seeks it in the following manner. He seats himself on the top of a rock, looking all around for food. And, whenever there happens to be a fallen beast lying near, the claw of the right foot changes colour and he knows at once that a carcase is near; and he flies up high in the air, and therefore is he called Gyps, because he rises from the earth into the heights. And, when he has raised himself to a great height, suddenly there streams from his eye a beam as of a star, showing him the way to the food. And, when the sign leaves him, then he casts himself from the height down to the earth, and finds his food.

And thou, wise man, lift not up thyself so that thou castest thyself not into the depths for thy food.

THE HALCYON

[From the Homilies of Basil] There is a bird living on the sea called the Halcyon. It builds its nest on the sea-shore, and lays its eggs in the sand, and hatches them in the winter season when the strongest might of the monstrous storm-wind raises the waves and drives them on the shore. And in this rough season the roaring of the winds and the violence of the waves become as it were idle, and calm rules the sea for seven days so long as the Halcyon, this insignificant little bird, broods on her eggs. For in these seven days the young ones creep out and cast the shells from them, coming forth to life. And, when they are come forth, the Halcyon must needs watch over them for seven days more, that they take no hurt and gather strength. And all this is afforded to the gentle bird as a gift from the dispenser of all things, who bears all in his heart. And this provident care over the little bird is known to all sailors and they call all these days by the name of the Halcyon.

Let these also serve thee for an incitement and a command how thou shouldest pray to God to perfect thy bodily life. For, if he bears so great consideration for that which lacks reason, how much greater is his care for thee through all the perils which may happen to thee who art the image of God? And if the great and terrible sea is controlled, on account of an insignificant little bird, and commanded to stay its tumult in the middle of winter, how much greater a wonder may happen to thee if only thou takest thy refuge in God?

THE NIGHT RAVEN

David said: "I am become as a Night Raven in the deserted town." (Ps. 102, 6)

Physiologus says of the Night Raven that he loves night better than day. So also has our Lord Jesus Christ loved us who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death, that is the heathen, better than the Jews, who also have received the promise of the Father (Is. 9, 2; Matt. 4, 6). Thereof spake the Lord when he said: "Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12, 32)

But thou wilt say to me that the Night Raven is unclean according to the Law, and how then can he appear before the presence of the Saviour? How says the Apostle: "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf" (II Cor. 5, 21). "He has abased Himself that He might deliver us and raise us" (II Cor. 11, 7). And so the Lord has loved the darkness, namely the heathen, more than the murderous and god-hating Jews, because of their apostasy; and those which in time past were no people have become the people of God. "For I will call those my people who were not my people and my beloved who were not beloved." (Rom. 9, 25)

Well now has Physiologus spoken of the Night Raven.

THE CROW

Wellspake Jeremiah to Jerusalem: “Thou satst as a deserted Crow.” (Jer. 3, 2)

Physiologus relates of the Crow that it lives in monogamy—neither the male nor the female takes another mate when one has died. So also with the synagogue of the Jews, the earthly Jerusalem: after she killed Christ, the Lord is no more her husband. For it says “We have betrothed you to a man as a pure virgin” (II Cor. 11, 2). So, when we hold the man in our hearts, then the Devil cannot enter, but, when the manly word is gone out of the soul, then steps in the adversary, for behold he that keepeth Israel slumbers not nor sleeps, and never may the robber break into his strong house.

THE SWALLOW

The Swallow appears in the summer-time when the winter is past and gone. Then in the early dawn she twitters and wakes the sleepers and calls to work. So the perfected ascetic, when the winter of the body is past and every fleshly desire extinguished, rising in purity from his bed remembers first in the early dawn to resort to the word of God; and in him is fulfilled that Scripture: “In the morning shall the Lord hear thy voice.” “Awake thou that sleepest and Christ shall shine upon thee.” (Eph. 5, 14) The Swallow bears only once, and never bears again.

So our Saviour was only once born, only once buried, and once only did He rise from the dead. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Father of all.

Finely now spake Physiologus of the Swallow.

The Swallow has yet another attribute. It is a harmless bird. Half its time it wanders in the wilderness, and half its time it seeks food in the towns. When the young are brought forth, often one of them is blind, and then the mother flies into the wilderness, and brings thence a plant, and lays it on the blinded eyes, and straightway the sight is recovered.

And thou too, wise man, so conduct thyself that thou mayest gather fruit in the present life as well as in the future; and, when thou art blinded by sin, go to the wilderness and take the plant, that is penance, and lay it on thy understanding which is blinded by ungodliness against the light of the blessed Trinity; and the blindness of sin will be healed.

Well spake Physiologus of the Swallow.

THE LAPWING OR HOOPOE

It is written: “Whosoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.” (Ex. 21, 15)

And how are some murderers of father or mother?

There is a bird called the Lapwing. When the young of this bird see that their parents are growing old, they pull out their old feathers, and lick their eyes, and warm the parents under their own wings, and renew them; so that they become young again. And they say to their parents: “As you troubled yourselves to take care of us and to nourish us when we were helpless so do we to you in like manner.” And therefore the Lapwing is known above all birds as a father-and-mother-loving bird.

How wicked are those who love not their parents. “Remember that thou wast begotten of them and recompense them the things they have done for thee.” (Sirach vii, 28)

[Mustoxydes] The Lapwing is more dutiful to its parents than all other birds. Know then, wise man, that, although he is but a little bird, God has given him such wisdom that he cares for those who cared for him. Both parents fly and tend their young in holes of trees and they go out therefrom and bring food and feed their young. And, by the time the young are grown up, the parents lose their feathers and become weak as young ones, and cannot fly and get food. How are they to live? But the young ones have a beautiful thought: “As our parents reared us up with toil and trouble and have brought

us to full stature, so will we also bring food for them and nourish them until their feathers grow again and they can fly with us once more.”

See, wise man, what wisdom God has given to the Lapwing, and remember that thy own father and mother nourished thee with trouble and with pains, and do thou give them the reward of the same, and return their care to thy parents even to the end of their lives so that their prayers may stand by thee to protect thee from every evil.

THE TURTLE-DOVE

In The Song of Songs Solomon witnesses and says: “The voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land.” (Cant. 2, 12)

Physiologus says of the Turtle-dove that she always returns to the wilderness because she does not care to be for long in the midst of a crowd of mankind.

So also watched the Saviour on the Mount of Olives when He took with Him Peter, James, and John, and went up the mountain, and there were seen of them Moses and Elias and the voice was heard from the clouds saying “This is my son in whom I am well pleased.”

And as the Turtle-dove rejoices at her return, so also shall the true followers of Christ rejoice at his return.

It is written “As a Turtle-dove did I chatter, and as a dove did I mourn.” (Is. 38, 14)

Physiologus relates further of the Turtle-dove that she is very talkative. When she is widowed, she never mates again, but dies from longing after the dead one.

So is this bird like to Christ who is our very wise and talkative Turtle-dove, the truly sweet-voiced bird who with his Gospel messages enchants all under heaven. He is in truth the gentle, innocent, and simple dove, for in his mouth was no falsehood found.

Further the Turtle-dove has this attribute. It is of all birds and of all beasts the most faithful to its mate. They fly together and bring up their young together. But, should she be separated from her mate, she joins with no other to the end of her life.

And do thou, oh man!, cling to one wife only, in order that thou mayest find a dwelling in the Second Company.

THE DOVE

The holy John said: "I saw heaven open and the Holy Ghost descending as a dove." (John 1, 32)

There are many kinds of Dove, and of divers colours. But, when the keeper brings all his Doves together, he can in no wise persuade any of them to enter the dove-cot until the flame-coloured Dove has entered first.

When now the Father, before the coming of his Son in likeness of a Dove, sent Moses, Elijah, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hezekiel, Daniel, and the other prophets to call men to life, there was none that was able to bring man unto life. But, when Christ was sent down from Heaven by the Father, He led all into life, saying "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden." For He Himself is the flame-coloured Dove, as is written in the Canticles: "My beloved is ruddy, said the bride" (Cant. 5, 10), which is the Church of Christ.

Well now spake Physiologus of the Dove.

Physiologus relates also that when Doves fly close together in a flock the hawk dare not approach them because of the loud rustling of their wings; but, when the hawk finds one wandering by itself, he catches and destroys it easily.

And this we see also in a crowd of young women. When, like a flock, they gather themselves together in the Church, raising a melodious song of praise with one accord to God after prayer and fasting, then the Devil dares not draw near them, being scared by their eager prayer and their sweet concord. But, when he finds one wandering by herself, her he catches and devours easily. So now let no Christian virgin forsake the Church of Christ, lest she become the prey of the Evil One.

Well now spake Physiologus concerning the Dove.

[Mustoxydes] Learn this attribute by which the Dove is distinguished among other birds. The white Doves and the coloured, the black and the flame-coloured, fly together, and rear their young. And they are not able to separate from each other. So long as the flame-coloured Dove flies before and shows them the food, they fly after her. As it is said: “Of all the fowls that are created thou hast named thee one Dove.” (II Esdras 5, 26)

So also before the coming of the Saviour the prophets Moses and Aaron, Samuel and David, Micah and Isaiah, Jeremiah and the others all spake concerning Jesus. But they could not make the word manifest until the flame-coloured Dove came there where John Baptist stood. This made the word manifest, showing it to all and saying: “Behold the Lamb of God!”

The hawk cannot injure the Doves because they keep close together. So do thou, wise man, go not far from the godly assembly lest the Enemy find thee alone and slay thee.

Well spake Physiologus of the Dove.

THE PARTRIDGE

Jeremiah said: “The Partridge gathers eggs which she has not laid, providing herself with abundance without any trouble, but in the midst of her days she is forsaken by them and in her last days she becomes mad.” (Jer. 17, 11)

Physiologus says of the Partridge that it hatches the eggs of other birds and brings up the young as its own. But, when the young are grown each one flies away to its own kind, and leaves her desolate.

So does the Devil get those who are not yet grown strong in mind. But, when they are come to years of discretion, they begin to recognize their heavenly parents, Christ and the Apostles and Prophets, and turn themselves to them.

Well spake Physiologus of the Partridge.

THE PEACOCK

The Peacock is the most gaily coloured of all birds. He is beautiful of colour and lordly in plumage. When he passes by, he looks at himself and rejoices much over himself. He shakes himself, turns a somersault, and looks proudly around. But, when he glances at his feet, he screams wildly, for his feet are not suitable to his beautiful appearance.

And thou too, wise man, when thou regardest thy pomp and thy possessions dost delight thyself and rejoice and feel proud; but, when thou lookest at thy feet, that is thy sins, then cry aloud and lament to God, and despise thy sins as the Peacock his feet, so that thou mayest appear right in the presence of thy bridegroom.

Well spake Physiologus concerning the Peacock.

THE ASIDA OR OSTRICH

Jeremiah the Prophet said: “The Turtle-dove and the Swallow know the time of their return and the Asida knows her time from the skies.” (Jer. 8, 7)

The Asida is a bird—nevertheless it is not one made for flight. It is known to us as the Ostrich. It has two wings yet it does not fly. This bird contemplates the skies. When it wishes to lay its eggs, it is careful not to lay them on the earth before the Pleiades go out; but, when the Pleiades have disappeared and the corn is in the ear and the hot days have come, then the bird lays its eggs at once. Now hearken to the reason. This bird is lazy. It digs a hole in the earth, and lays the eggs therein, and covers them with sand; and since it is lazy it troubles itself no more about the eggs. It lays them in the summer-time so that the warm sun may do what it should do itself.

If now the Asida and the Turtle-dove know their time, so much the more certainly should we know our Lord, and follow his commands and serve him.

[Pitra] Physiologus relates further of the Ostrich that, while it hatches its eggs, it never turns its eyes elsewhere; for if it should look in any other direction, thenceforth it would be of no further use to the eggs, but they would remain infertile.

It is also related of him that he swallows even glowing iron and nails and fiery coals, and all these do good to his stomach, for his nature is very cold. [The remainder is missing]

[Syriac] Physiologus relates also of the Ostrich that this bird is of very great strength, and is known in India and in other parts, by the name Tzefarfilo or elephant-bird, because he carries off young elephants, while they are still small, from the side of their mother; and, after he has placed them on his back, flies through the air; and in the wilderness, where he abides, devours them. For it is written of him in the Holy Scripture, as well as in profane stories, that he can carry away a horse with his rider. (Job 39, 18)

And Physiologus relates further that the Indians, when they want to hunt him, bind oxen with hard and untearable thongs to a wagon on which they lay large stones. When now he comes to steal an ox, he fixes his claws in its head, and cannot draw them forth again, so that he is easily caught and killed.

For God has made him stupid and without the reason to match his strength (Job 39, 17), so stupid, indeed, that he leaves behind his eggs on the bare earth in the middle of the way, where they are trampled on and broken, and this is so ordered lest they should multiply and become a danger to man.

[Thetbaldus] The Asida is of the following form: it has two feet of a camel and two wings of a bird. It flies near the ground, and Isaiah says of it that it knows the time to nest, which is when the star Vigilia appears in July. Then the Asida makes a hole, and covers the eggs with sand, and then forgets and leaves them, trusting that the warmth of the sun will hatch them.

So does the wise man leave the world behind him as do the holy hermits.

THE PHŒNIX

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: “I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again” (John 10, 18). And the Jews were angry at his saying.

Now there is a bird in India called Phœnix. And at the end of five hundred years he comes to the trees of Lebanon, and fills his wings with pleasant odours, and he makes known his return to the priest of Heliopolis early in the month Nisan or Adar (that is Phamenoti or Pharmuti). And the priest, when he hears the tidings, comes there and fills up the altar with wood of vines. And the bird comes to Heliopolis laden with odours of pleasant spices, and settles on the altar, and kindles a fire and burns himself. And on the following morning the priest searches through the ashes on the altar and finds therein a small worm. And on the second day, behold!, he achieves feathers and becomes as a young bird. And on the third day they find him even as before, the Phœnix, and he salutes the priest, and flies away and returns to his old dwelling-place.

If now this bird has the power to slay himself and come to life again, how should reasonable men complain of our Lord Jesus Christ when He said: “I have power to lay down my life and to take it again.”

For the Phœnix takes on itself the image of our Lord, when, coming down from heaven, he brought with him both wings full of pleasant odours, the excellent heavenly words, so that as we stretch out our hands in prayer we become filled with the pleasant scent of his mercy.

Well spake Physiologus of the Phœnix.

[Ponce de Leon] The Phœnix is a bird more beautiful than the Peacock, for the Peacock indeed has golden and silver wings but the Phœnix has wings of jacynth and emerald, and is adorned with the colours of all costly precious stones. On his head he has a crown, and spurs on his feet. He dwells in India, lives five hundred years, and nourishes himself on the air by the cedars of Lebanon without food or drink. But, after five hundred years, he fills his wings with pleasant odours, and, when the priest at

Heliopolis begins the sacrifice, he comes out of his nest and flies to the priest.

[Continuation as above]

[Syriac] Every Phœnix is the only one and lives for himself alone and is bound by no espousals. He journeys to the land of Egypt each five hundredth year, and is seen by the priest high above the altar coming from the East. And, when he comes, he brings under his wings sweet-smelling cinnamon and other spices; and he collects wood, and heaps it upon the altar, and lays himself on his back on the burning wood, and becomes burnt utterly to ashes. And out of the ashes rises a worm, which grows into a young bird, and achieves wings; and on the third day resumes his full form, and becomes the Phœnix complete and perfect as he was before. Thereupon he departs on his way and flies to India, where he lived before.

What an image and symbol is here pictured by the Creator for the instruction of mankind! For God, the Creator of the mystery which was fulfilled in Christ, did hereby inform us of that which he had decreed. Christ came for our salvation, like the Phœnix, after a long period of years, and, taking on our nature, He brought the sweet spices of life and salvation, as Isaiah had prophesied. And He strengthens us through this same sweet odour until we also become sweet smelling. And He willingly raised his Cross on Golgotha in the town Jerusalem, as also the Phœnix prepared and laid himself on the altar of the City of the Sun in Egypt. And Christ suffered death and parted his soul from his body, as also the Phœnix lays himself down on his back and burns himself to death. And as on the third day the new risen worm takes the form of the Phœnix, through that same mystery God the word caused His body to rise again the third day, because it had suffered no corruption in the grave. And as the worm of the Phœnix on the third day took its full and perfect form, so in the same manner the body of Christ, when He arose from the grave on the third day, became immortal and unchangeable. And as at length the Phœnix returns to India, his former dwelling-place, so did Christ, after He had arisen, carry His body to His eternal dwelling-place.

THE PLOVER OR CHARADRIUS

There is a bird named the Charadrius who is spoken of in Deuteronomy. (Deut. 14, 18)

Physiologus relates of Charadrius that it is wholly white and has no black on it. It is found in the palaces of kings. And, when any one is ill, they learn from it whether the sick man will die or will recover. They carry it to the bedside of the sick man, and, if the sickness is unto death, the Plover turns its face away from the man, and all know that he will surely die. But, if the sickness is unto life, then the Plover looks sharply at the sick man, and the sick man looks towards the bird; and the Plover sucks up the illness into himself, and flies up in the regions of the sun, and sprinkles his wings, and burns up the illness, and he himself is saved and the sick man with him.

Beautifully now does this appear as the image of our Saviour. For our Lord is wholly white and has no black on him. When now He came to the Jews, who would not recognize Him because of their wickedness, He turned away His divinity. But He came to us, the feeble ones, who hastened to him. And He took our sins on Him, and bore our sickness, and was lifted up on the Cross. And He has made us whole, we who were sick with the sickness of idol-worship.

Well and fitly has Physiologus spoken of the Plover.

THE IBIS

The Ibis is unclean according to the Law (Lev. 2, 17). He knows not how to dive under the water, but loves the shallow waters and the mouths of rivers, and there he seeks his food. He cannot dive down to the depths where the pure fishes swim, but lives entirely in the shallows, where the impure fishes abide.

Do thou, oh man!, learn to dive deep so that thou mayest reach the depths of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

Moreover, if thou dost not stretch out thine hand and make the sign of the Cross, thou wilt never sail over the sea of life. For the sign of the Cross is powerful over all creatures.

The sun, unless it stretches forth its beams, gives no light; the moon, unless it stretches out both its horns, gives no light; the bird, unless it stretches out both wings, cannot fly. Moses, when he stretched out his hands, conquered Amalek; so did Daniel subdue the lions; and Jonah abide in the belly of the sea-monster. Thekla was cast before wild beasts and Sea-lions, and the sign of the Cross saved her. Susannah was delivered from the Elders, Judith from Holofernes, Esther from Ahasuerus, and the three men from the fiery furnace. All were saved by faith.

THE STORK

The Stork is a bird that loves its nest and its children. From the middle and above he is white; from the middle downward he is dark-coloured. The stork goes not far from his nest, and always either the father or the mother stays near it.

So also our Lord Jesus Christ showed to the heavenly ones the upper side of Godhead, while to men he showed the underside of manhood; because the angels saw only from above, and the earthly saw only from below.

[Mustoxydes] The Storks fly in pairs, and bring up their young together. When the eggs are laid, the female sits and guards them while the male brings food. Then they change over with each other and never leave the nest unguarded.

Do thou, wise man, let the day not pass without prayer, or thou wilt not conquer the devil. At a certain time all the Storks fly in one flock and travel to another place; and again at their proper time they return and build their nests and hatch their young.

As the Stork flies away and returns to the old nest, so the Lord was taken from us and will return again in his proper time, building up again that which is broken down: as also the prophet said: "So build the sparrows there where their dwelling-place is appointed."

THE HERON

As said the holy prophet David: “The dwelling-place of the Heron is over them all.” (Ps. 104, 17)

This bird is truly the very wisest of all birds. For he has one only dwelling-place and one single home. He seeks not many camping places, but where he has once laid himself down there he feeds and sleeps. Nor does he ever touch a dead body. Nor does he fly to many places: his food and his dwelling he finds in the same place.

And thou now, oh man!, seek not the many places of the heretics. One resting-place shall be for thee, the holy orthodox Church of God; one food, the bread descended from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. Touch not the dead food of heretical and unorthodox learning.

This bird lives with such great discretion that, before he chooses a mate, he mourns forty days. Then, when he has mourned these forty days, he chooses a mate. And, if he has committed sin, he mourns yet another forty days for the sin he has committed.

This bird builds his nest in high trees where nothing shades him, but he has the pure breeze. And other birds build their nests under his nest, in order that they may be protected by it as the prophet David says: “The dwelling of the Heron guards them.”

And do thou, wise man, copy this bird, and behave with discretion, observing the Commandments; and flee far from sin as says the godly Apostle: “Fly from unchastity, for every sin that man has committed is out of the body.” But, if thou sinnest then repent, and bemoan thy sins like the bird, because the repenting and bemoaning are the bath which washes away the sin from the soul. And remind thyself of that holy prophet David, who committed adultery and murder and received pardon through the tears of repentance. Tears procure great forgiveness of sin. And, if thou repentest and turnest thyself and mournest over thy sins, thou mayest straightway receive pardon from God. And fix thy nest, like this bird, on high trees that is to say, turn thyself from evil and do

good, that thy nest may be in the high places of the royal city of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Whose glory and power is from eternity to eternity.

Well spake Physiologus of the Heron.

THE PELICAN

The holy prophet David sings: “I am like a Pelican in the wilderness.” (Ps. 102, 7)

Physiologus relates of the Pelican that he loves his young very much. When the young are born, and as soon as they are a little grown, they strike their parents in the face. Then the parents strike back again, and kill them. But presently the parents begin to have compassion on them and, after they have mourned three whole days over the children they killed, the mother comes at the end of the third day and opens her side and drops her blood on the dead bodies of the young and arouses the life in them.

So also said our Lord by the prophet Isaiah: “I have raised up sons, but they have fallen away from me.” God has created us, and we have fought against him. We, the creatures, have set ourselves against the Creator. Yet, when He came to the height of the Cross He opened His side and dropped blood and water to our redemption and eternal life—the blood because He said: “He took the cup and gave thanks”, and the water because of the baptism of penance.

And Physiologus relates further of the Pelican and the snake that the snake is very evil-minded toward its young. But the Pelican—what does he devise? He fastens his nest on a high place, and builds a hedge round it on all sides against the snake. But the evil minded snake—what does he do? He looks around noticing whence the wind comes, and thence, blowing the poison towards the nest, he kills the young ones. Now comes the Pelican and sees that her children are dead, and she looks up to a cloud and flies there; and, striking her side with her wings till blood streams, she lets the drops fall through the cloud down on the young ones, and they come to life again.

The Pelican is the Lord, the children are Adam and Eve and their race. The snake is the Evil One; and the nest is paradise. Then the Evil One, the snake, blows and they

become dead through sin; but now our Lord is raised on the precious Cross because of his love for us, and, pierced in the side, sends to us through the cloud of the Holy Ghost the gift of eternal life.

THE GERAHAV

There is a bird called the Gerahav, which inhabits the sea. This bird lays eggs only with great pain, and it strives that the eggs may be very large. It hides the eggs in the depths of the ocean and never leaves them, or at most but once or twice, so much does it fear its enemies. Then, rising to the surface of the water and with eyes fastened on the depths, it broods over the eggs until the young creep out of the shell. Then the bird dives down into the depths, and leads the young ones to the shore, and feeds them.

So does God send down his look on the children of the earth, and from the height of heaven broods over them with his eyes until we rise out of this abyss of misery into the New Jerusalem. As the Gerahav barely raises itself from the depth of the sea in order to brood over its young and bring them to the light of day, even so does Christ draw us with great trouble back from the pit of sin, in order to draw us out from the hands of the Devil and his hellish companions.

THE GRYPHON

The Gryphon is the largest bird of all the birds of heaven. It lives in the far East in an inlet of the ocean-stream. And, when the sun rises over the water-depths and lights the world with its beams, the Gryphon spreads out its wings and receives the rays of the sun. And another rises with it, and the two fly together towards the sunset, as it is written: "Spread thy wings, dispenser of light; give the world light."

In like manner stand the two Gryphons for the Godhead, that is for the Archangel Michael and the Holy Mother of God, and they receive thy spirit, so that it may not be said: "I know you not."

Well now spake Physiologus concerning the Gryphon.

THE BAT

Physiologus says there is a bird called the Night-bat. And this is by nature a four-footed animal, and of all birds it alone has teeth, and brings forth its young after the manner of four-footed creatures, and feeds them from its udders. But it flies through the air flying round about near to the earth, not swiftly nor with outspread wings, but with wings which are like sails made of skin. And they love companionship, so they are always collected together in flying.

Whom, oh godly man, does this represent in the spiritual sense but the Devil, who is a Night-bat, that is a lover of darkness? This bat is of all birds of heaven the one most like a four-footed beast, for it uses teeth like the Devil, who through his abominable sins has become a stranger to heavenly customs and to heavenly ways of living. With the dull-witted beasts he crawls on the earth like to the Bat, which flies around close to the earth with its wings of skin. And so do the wings, resembling sails of membrane, betoken the evil deeds of the Devil, which are full of death and empty of life. And he raises not himself on high with swift and broad-spread pinions, which are the right judgment and purity through which man discerns goodness and loves it more than evil and condemns wickedness and loves and treasures righteousness.

THE SUN-LIZARD

There is a beast named Sun-lizard, and Physiologus relates of it that, when it grows old, it becomes hindered and dazzled in its sight, and is not able to bear the sunlight. What does the Lizard now do by virtue of his own beautiful attribute? He seeks a wall with an Eastern aspect, and slips into a crevice thereof. At the rising of the sun he opens his eyes and looks sharply at it, and his sight is cured. In this manner also, oh man!, when thou wearest the garb of the old man and the eyes of the soul are become

dull, seek thou the arising sun of righteousness, Christ the Lord, and He will open the eyes of thine heart, and disperse the darkness.

THE SERPENT

Our Lord says in the Gospel: “Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”
(Matt, 10, 16)

Physiologus relates of the Serpent that it has four chief attributes. The first is this: When the Serpent grows old, its eyes become dim, and it sees nothing clearly. What does it now do? If it desires to become young again, it first fasts forty days and forty nights until the skin becomes withered. And it seeks a narrow opening between two rocks, and, gliding in, it presses the body through and rubs off the old skin, and thus becomes young again.

And thou too, oh man!, when thou desirest to cast away the old garment of sin, squeeze thy body through the narrow way of fasting and discipline, for narrow is the gate, and strait the way that leads to life; and thou wilt become young instead of old, and wilt be delivered.

The second attribute of the Serpent is this: When it goes to the stream to drink, it carries not its poison with it but leaves it behind in its hole.

So must we, when we hasten to the Church of God, the never-failing water which is full of heavenly mysteries, take with us no evil passion, but, at peace with all, must we come to it, for who does not so, he eats and drinks damnation to himself, according to the holy saying.

The third attribute of the Serpent: When it sees any naked person, it is at once afraid, and turns away; but a clothed person it springs upon at once.

So should we reflect on our nakedness, because, when our father Adam was naked in Paradise, the enemy was not able to entice him in the snare. And, when thou bearest the garment of the old man, then he springs on thee; but, when thou castest it off then he himself turns and flees.

And the fourth attribute is this: When the hunter comes to the Serpent to kill it, the Serpent abandons his whole body to the death, but guards only his head.

And so must we also in the time of persecution abandon the whole body to death preserving only the head or the faith—that is, we must not deny Christ, for the head of every man is Christ.

THE ADDER OR ASP

The Adder has the appearance of an ordinary snake. But the male is in the East and the female is in the West, and they both go to the South. And the female gnaws the head of the male and becomes with child; but the male dies. When now the female has brought forth her young, the children rise up and gnaw the head of their mother; and she also dies. But, when they are fully grown, they do also in the same manner as their parents did.

And every Adder burns up the grass near where it lies in its nest. And, as the dryness of its breath spreads, it burns up all the earth within a circle of three feet, and nothing living can draw nearer than seven feet; and, if anything should come within this range, either man or beast, so surety it dies.

In what way now does the enchanter catch the adder? He goes to the place where she lies, and makes seven trusses of dried plants, and soaks them seven days until they rot. And he takes a rod seven ells long, and he stops up his lungs, ears, and nose so that the adder's breath cannot reach him. And he approaches from a distance with flattering words, and draws near and casts, one after another, the seven trusses on her. And she burns up the first truss, and the second likewise, and so with all the others. When now the enchanter draws nearer still the Adder lies close and looks at the man, and stops her ears so that she may not hear the voice of the enchanter; for, if she hears his voice, she dies at once. And, when he is come to the distance of seven ells from her, he stretches forth his rod and separates her tail from her ears; and she dies at once. And the enchanter who has subdued her becomes her master, and takes from her whatever he wishes.

So likewise were the Jews in their time set fast in error. Through the hardening of their hearts they consumed the head of the male, that is the Law and the prophets. They consumed the head of the male and of the female, that is of John the Baptist and both Testaments. And therefore spake the prophet David: “Like as the deaf adder stoppeth her ears that she may not hear the voice of the charmer, so truly is the poisoner poisoned by the wise man” (Ps. 58, 4, 5). The Jews were rightly called the Adder which stoppeth her ears, inasmuch as they do not hear the voice of the charmer, the bridegroom, nor the voice of the holy Scriptures. The Devil also is called the Adder; the parching heat is the power of evil; the floor is hell and its torrents. Who is the charmer?—he is Christ. What are the trusses?—the seven heavens. What the rod of ten ells?—the sons of David. What is the enchantment?—it is the voice of the Saviour, who overcame the Devil.

Well spake Physiologus of the Adder.

THE FROG

There is a Frog called the Land-frog. Physiologus relates of him that he can sustain the heat and the glow of the sun, but when the rain touches him he dies. But the Water-frog, when it rises out of the water so that the sun’s ray touches it, immediately it dives under the water again. Now the Land-frog resembles good men who support the heat of temptation and yet, when the cold winter of persecution touches them, then their virtue perishes. But the children of this world are Water-frogs. When the sun of temptation touches them, then they dive again deeper in their former wanton passions.

Well spoke Physiologus of the Frog.

[Ponce de Leon] The Land-frog sustains the warmth of the sun; he also endures cold, rain, wind, and winter-storms. But the Water-frog can bear none of these: at the beginning of the winter he sinks himself in the depths; but, when the sun shines brightly, he comes out of the water and basks in the warmth—yet, when the heat of the sun increases, he can no longer endure it, and dives again into the depths.

So also those monks who spend their time in idleness cannot endure hunger, thirst, nakedness, abstinence, and lying on the hard ground. But those who do not yield to laziness, fast willingly, and endure hardships.

THE SALAMANDER

It is written: “When thou passest through fire the flame shall not burn thee.” (Is. 43, 2)

Physiologus relates of the Salamander that, when it enters the furnace, it puts out the flame; and, when it enters the oven, it makes the whole bath cold.

If now the Salamander extinguishes fire by its own attribute, how much more should the righteous by their own godly behaviour extinguish the fire, as they stopped the mouths of lions, and as the three men cast in the fiery furnace suffered no harm and indeed put out the fires of the furnace?

Well spake Physiologus of the Salamander.

THE BEE

The wise Solomon said: “Smallest among birds is the bee, and yet its fruit is the chief among sweet things.” (Sirach 11, 3)

Physiologus says that Bees dwell together in a great company; they go in by one door; they work at the same work; and provide with diligence flying together and hastening to do the common toil. And—what is greater than this—they live under a king or prince of like nature with themselves; and they make no beginning of their common work nor hurry to the meadows and flowers until the king who is over them has made the beginning. They choose not the king to this honour but his overlordship comes to him by the rule and custom which the Creator set before them to guide them. Every prince has also a sting, but he is not accustomed to wound. Yet, when he turns from his way and stings, he is at once punished for his boldness; for, as soon as he wounds a man

with his sting, it remains left in the wound and he himself surely dies from the pain. The Bees gather honey out of plants, making use of their mouths; and they entice wax out of the flowers, helping also with their feet. And the Bees carry away the honey they gather, and out of the wax they build their cells with great skill; and they separate the wax as it were into holes most cunning; and they pour the honey into the holes. This at first is very clear and fluid, but later after it has been sometime preserved in the holes becomes cooked, and is then better and thicker. And, when violent winds arise while they are away from their home, they drop down and sit on a stone or rock until the violence of the wind has abated; and then they return home to the house.

Let us consider what this means in a spiritual sense. What does this picture to our human reason? The feeble Bees who dwell together in a community and carefully set about a common work are the holy souls of the sons of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. These dwell like a flock in the same Church, and engage in the same work in common, that is the holy mysteries. While also a prince, or leader, is appointed to them who is a partaker of their nature, so has God placed the Archpresbyter, who partakes of human nature as leader in his Church, so that no confusion may befall the Ordinances. This leader truly possesses a sting with which he wounds not—that is liberty, which is given by God alike to the Archpresbyter and to his disciples. Yet the Archpresbyter wounds not with the sting, that is he guards holiness with his liberty and turns not to licence.

And as the Bees gather honey from the plants making use of their mouths, and wax out of the flowers making use of their feet, and carry it away and separate it and pour it out while it is yet thin, so also the holy ones of the Church pasture on the plant of God and on the holy flowers of the godly books, and collect from them the one food of spiritual sweetness.

THE WASP

Holy David struck the psaltery and prophesied saying: “They have surrounded me like wasps; they are destroyed like a fire of straw.” (Ps. 118, 12)

Physiologus teaches of the wasp that it is separated or narrowed in the middle of the body, and has not the power to breathe or to draw in the breath with lungs in the same manner as we and the beasts do. But their whole food and nourishment comes from the air; and, if thou touchest one with oil, it dies readily, because the greasiness of the oil stops the natural air-holes. But, if thou sprinkled the wasp with vinegar after the oil, then its life becomes gradually kindled again, because the air passages are opened by the sharpness of the vinegar.

What spiritual truth do we learn from this? For this has not been ordered foolishly by the Creator of all things, but has been ordained for our instruction—all this the great and the small, so that, when we consider the things visible to us, we are undertaking the knowledge of the invisible. For we, in our bodies as we now are cannot attain the invisible except through the visible. For that which cannot be seen by reason of the dullness of our bodies is pictured to us as it were through a form or image of him who cares for all things which by him were brought into being.

The wasps, who are divided in the middle of their bodies and are destroyed as a fire of straw and who perish as soon as oil drops on them, are the rebellious Devils and Fiends, who are divided in the middle of the body that is, by their mutual strife; and they are badly armed for conflict, for, if only thou takest with thee oil, that is the good works full of faith and courage, so mayest thou full well engage in battle with them. For, so soon as they come near the holy oil, their teeth become blunted by thy zeal; their air passages become choked by its greasiness; and they are as dead so long as they have not their breath by thy permission. For, if thou persistest not in the anointing or pourest out vinegar while thou slackenest the vigilance of the oil, that is failest in righteousness, then art thou like to die, for their life is given to them again as the air-passages open, and they will wound thee with their sting, and deride and kill thee.

THE ANT

Solomon says in the Proverbs: “Go to the ant, thou sluggard.” (Prov. 6, 6)

Physiologus says of the ant that it has three attributes.

The first is this: As the Ants go in a single line one behind the other each one carries a grain in its mouth. And those which have no grain to carry, do not say to the others ‘Give us of your corn’, nor do they take it by force, but they go further and find a grain for themselves.

Let both the wise and the foolish virgins take notice of this.

The second attribute is this: When they store up their food in the earth, they bite the grain in two pieces so that the corn may not sprout during the winter; and they suffer hunger thereby. And, again, the Ants know through their wisdom when it will be hot or when the moist breeze is about to wet them. If thou watchest the Ant bringing inside the grains of corn which are outside her hole, then thou mayest know that the rainy season and the winter are at hand. But, when she brings out her food from within and spreads it out, then know that it will be warm weather.

And do thou put away the words of the Old Testament from thee, that the letter may not kill thee. For Paul says that the Law is spiritual. For by considering the bare letter of the Word the Jews became hungry and slayers of each other.

The third attribute is this: The Ants often go to the field, and climb up the stem of corn, and drag down the grain. But, before climbing, the Ant scents the underpart of the stalk, and through the scent it can tell which is wheat and which is barley. It leaves the barley, and goes to the wheat and carries away the grain. Now barley is the food of cattle. For Job said: “Instead of wheat grow me barley” (Job 31, 40). Therefore fly thou the food of cattle and take the wheat gathered in the barns. For barley is like to the learning of the heretics, but the wheat is the true belief in Christ.

THE SEA-CRAB

Physiologus warns us to be careful not to imitate a despicable creature which lives in the sea and is called Cancer. How great is the slyness and deceit of the Sea-crab! For this beast desires the flesh of the fish called Oyster. But the Oyster is difficult to get at, since it is protected by a chalky covering, as if surrounded by a wall, so that the tender flesh which nature has placed in this protection remains secure. The inner lining of the shell is like polished potsherd, formed of hollow scales lying one within another. Such is the natural armour provided for it by the Creator. But the feet of the Crab can in no wise prevail against this protection; nor can it break in through it. When now the Crab sees an Oyster coming forth and warming herself in a place protected from the wind, he waits until the sun shines upon her and she begins to open her back to receive the warmth: then the Crab comes cautiously and places a little stone between the shells so that she cannot close them again. And through the space that remains open the Crab seizes the Oyster and pulls it out. Thus much is the feeble power of the Crab able to accomplish through its great cunning. How wonderful is the wickedness of this beast; speech or voice cannot express it. But do thou from the dexterity of the Crab learn to do fine deeds and turn them to the increase of righteousness, but in no wise afflict thy fellow-men with the same.

The Crab resembles those who with evil cunning set themselves against their neighbours, who lie in hiding against their brother, and satisfy their minds with the misfortunes of others. Let us shun to imitate wicked men, and let us be satisfied with that which we rightfully possess. For poverty with justice and truth is better than all the pleasures and all the gain of those who abide in wickedness. Do thou, wise man, look around thee and study the lesson, and take example from it as Physiologus has written.

THE TREE PERIDEXION

There is a tree in India called Peridexion. Its fruit is the sweetest of all, pleasant and very useful. The Doves delight themselves on it, and feed there, and nest in the tree. But in that land lives a snake who is unfriendly minded towards Doves. The snake is afraid of this tree, even of its shadow, and dare not approach the Doves nor come under the shadow of the tree. But, when the shadow goes to the Western side of the tree, the snake flies to the East, and goes around it and comes back when the shadow turns. But, should a Dove leave the tree in the darkness, then the snake finds it and kills it.

The tree now signifies the Father of all, and the wood thereof is Jesus Christ; for the wood is the tree of life for all who hold to it, which will give its fruit in due season. But the shadow of the tree is the Holy Ghost, “for the power of the highest shall overshadow thee and in the shadow of thy wings shall I rejoice.”

If now we keep close to wisdom, we eat the fruit of the spirit, which is peace and soberness, and are protected by the wood of life. But, when we wander away into the darkness then the Devil finds us, since we do not stay near the wood of life, and catches us easily. And thus said holy Paul because he knew this “Far be it from me to glory save in the Cross of my Lord, by which the world is crucified to me and I to the world.” (Gal. 6, 14)

Well now spake Physiologus of the tree Peridexion.

THE FIG-SYCAMORE

Holy Amos said: "I am no prophet nor a son of a prophet, but I was a goatherd and split figs." (Amos 7, 14)

Finely now does Amos present the image of Christ when he says that he climbed as a splitter of figs, as did Zaccheus when he climbed the Fig-sycamore tree.

Before the Figs are cleft there are in them insects called Ants; and dwelling in the darkness they see no light. Among themselves they say to one another, as it were, ‘we

inhabit a spacious land but yet we sit in darkness.’ But, when the Fig is split, they see the rays of the sun and the moon and the stars, and they say to themselves ‘Truly we sat in darkness and in the shadow of death before the fig was split.’ And if the fig is split on the first day on the third day it is fit for food.

So was also our Lord Jesus Christ cleft in the side, and blood and water came therefrom. But on the third day arose he from the dead, and we saw the light of the stars like the insects.

The goats that Amos herded do typify penance, because we men do weave out of their hair the garments of penance. “In sackcloth and ashes it is said do thy penance” (Matt. 4, 16). And also: “The people that sat in darkness saw a great light and to them that sat in the shadow of death to them is the light uprisen” (Is. 9, 2). And as when the Fig is split it serves for food on the third day, so is also our Lord Jesus Christ after He was cleft in the side risen up on the third day and become life for all.

THE DIAMOND

Physiologus relates of the Diamond that it is found in the East. It is never found in the day-time but only at night. It is called Adamant, because it subdues (δαμάζει) everything and is itself subdued by nothing.

And our Lord Jesus Christ himself judges all, but is judged by none. For He Himself said: “Which among you convicteth me of sin?” “And his name is the Bud” (Zech. 6, 12). And again: “There comes forth a star out of Jacob, and the dwellers in darkness have seen the light” (Is. 9, 2). All holy prophets and Apostles, who are as the diamond, are they who have yielded to no temptation but have remained noble and unsubdued.

The Diamond has yet another attribute. It neither fears iron nor does it take the smell of smoke. And, when the Diamond is found in a house, neither can the Devil break in nor will any evil thing be found there; but he who possesses it overcomes every devilish influence.

Now the Diamond is our Lord Jesus Christ. If thou hast him in thine heart, nothing evil will ever trouble thee.

THE AGATE AND THE PEARL

When the artificer seeks Pearls, he finds them by means of the Agate. He fastens the Agate to a stout rope, and lets it down in the sea. Now the Agate goes to the Pearl, and remains there and does not move. And directly the sailors see the place of the Agate, they follow the rope until they come to the place of the Agate, and there they find the Pearl.

Hear now how the Pearls come. There is a shell-beast in the sea named the Pearl-mussel. This mussel rises up out of the sea in the dawn of the morning and opens her mouth and sucks in heavenly dew, and shuts up in her shell the rays of the sun and the moon and the stars and out of the heavenly lights brings the Pearls to birth. The shell-beast has two shells in which the pearls are found.

The Agate now is the type of John Baptist, for he himself pointed out to us the spiritual pearl when he said: “Behold the Lamb of God which beareth the sin of the world” (John 1, 29). We must now take the sea for the world and the diver for the choir of prophets. The two mussel-shells for the Old and New Testaments—the sun, the moon, the stars, and the dew for the Holy Ghost which is enclosed in the Old and New Testaments; and the Pearl for our Lord Jesus Christ, for He Himself is a costly pearl. And thou, oh man!, sell all that thou possessest and gain the costly Pearl, which is Christ the Lord, so that thou mayest have a treasure in thy heart and be redeemed.

THE MAGNET-STONE

Physiologus relates of the Magnet-stone that it lifts iron, fastening it tight to itself and drawing it to itself.

If now created things draw one another, how much more the Creator, who has hung the heavens over the earth, the God of all things, who has drawn it out as the skin of an ox.

THE INDIAN STONE

There is a stone called the Indian Stone, and it has this attribute:

When a man has dropsy, the wise physicians seek this stone, and they bind it to the dropsical one for three hours; and the stone sucks up the fluid of the dropsy into itself. Then they loosen the stone, and weigh it against the man in the scales, and the little stone sends aloft the body of the man. But, when the stone has been laid three hours in the sun, lo! all the water that it sucked up from the man has been discharged; and the stone has become again quite pure as it was before.

The stone is the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect love which has driven out fear. The dropsical are we, who have the dirty water of sin in our hearts. But He, coming down from heaven and suffering, dwelt in our hearts and healed us: for He Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases.

THE KINDLING STONES

There are stones called Kindling Stone. These stones, when two of them approach each other, kindle themselves to a blaze and set on fire all that comes near them. For they have this attribute. The male and the female are separated far from each other: when they come near each other they set each other and everything around in a flame.

And thou, oh pure man!, avoid all women. Approach them not lest thou burnest up thy whole virtue. For Samson, when he gave himself up to a woman, lost all his strength through being shorn. And many, as it is written, “have been deceived by the beauty of women, for therewith love is kindled as a fire.” (Sirach 9, 8)

THE ECHENEIS

[From the Homilies of Basil] And thou must hear yet another wonder. A very large and to all appearance wonderfully sea-worthy ship, with wide and broad-spread sails holding its straight course before the wind, is stayed easily by a little fish which is called Echeneis. Its name betokens the stayer of a ship, and it holds it back for a long time so that it cannot move itself from the place. And through this thou can’st see a great ship in full sail, fastened as it were and rooted in the sea.

And dost thou not see in this little beast and its deed the power of the Creator? All this has the Creator done with this purpose, that the vigilance of thy spirit may be increased. And while thy hope and thy trust in him increase, so wilt thou guard thyself from the power of the Devil.

THE SEA-URCHIN

[From the Homilies of Basil] That which happens in the sea is beyond all speech or understanding. I have heard from one who lives on the coast that the seaurchin is a little and contemptible beast, which lives in the sea and which tells the sailor whether the waves will be calm or rough. For this Urchin seeks a rock whereon he hangs and clings, and he fastens himself to it as to an anchor, so that the waves, though they toss him here and there and up and down, cannot tear him away. And this he does as though he were minded to point out beforehand the oncoming of the storm, the tumult of which is already in his mind. So soon as the sailors see him they know by this sign that danger threatens them from the violence of the wind. There is no Chaldaean, no mathematician,

who can read in the courses of the stars what the movements of the winds will be. Who has taught this to the Urchin, a stupid little beast—who but the Lord himself, the ruler of the sea and the wind, who has revealed to the Urchin a glimpse of his omniscient majesty? For nothing happens but it testifies to his care, and there is nothing of his Creation which we can hold in contempt. The eye of his majesty pierces through everything, and all depends on his care for his eye is watchful and is intent on all to whom he has given life and food. If God does not shut out the Sea-urchin from his providence, shall not men partake of his watchful care?

THE POLYPUS

[From the Homilies of Basil] We must not pass over the deceitfulness, cunning, and trickery of the fish which is called Polypus. For on whatever stone or rock in the sea he fixes himself he makes his colour resemble the thing he hangs upon; and the fishes, while they stupidly swim round him, fancy he is dead and gone, because his colour does not distinguish him from the rock. Then they approach the stone so close as to touch him: thus he finds his food brought to him through his own artifice.

So are they framed who hide their cunning under a bright appearance and change their minds to please their rulers and adapt their deeds to their liking so that to outward appearance they seem to obey cheerfully. But with difficulty can one keep clear of them or avoid contaminating oneself with them, and it is impossible to protect oneself from their harmful strokes. Let us fly from the laying of snares and from cunning of every kind, and let us stand firm in uprightness and simplicity, which restrain us from violence. Wicked is the Serpent; and, because of its deceit, it bears the condemnation that it shall crawl on its belly. The righteous man in whom is no deceit is like Jacob, a plain man (Gen. 25, 27) in whom is no deceit. And of such was it said God maketh the solitary to dwell in a house. (Ps. 68, 7)